Increased prices of essential commodities

1758. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the prices of essential commodities which have recorded increase of more than 50 per cent during the last two years; and;

(b) the steps taken by Government to keep the prices of essential commodities under check?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) During the last two years ending November 2003, out of the 14 essential commodities monitored on daily basis, the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) number of only Mustard Oil has increased by more than 50%. The decline in mustard seed production due to deficient rainfall in 2002-2003 has resulted in the price rise.

(b) The Government have taken the following steps to keep the prices of essential commodities under check:

(i) A close watch has been maintained on the availability and prices of essential commodities in the country. The retail and wholesale prices of the essential commodities; viz., rice, wheat, atta, gram dal, tur/arhar, sugar, milk, tea, groundnut oil, mustard oil, vanaspati, potato, onion and salt, are monitored and reviewed regularly by the Central and State Governments at the highest level;

(ii) Imports of essential commodities like edible oils are allowed to augment their availability; and

(iii) All the State/UT Governments have been requested to take stringent actions against hoarders, black marketeers and others indulging in unfair trade practices under the Essential Commodites Act and Prevention of Black-marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act.